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SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE PASSES FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY (FIA) BUDGET

LANSING- Under the leadership of Senator Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood), the Family Independence Agency (FIA) Appropriations Subcommittee reported SB 283 (S-1) out of committee today with a unanimous 3-0 vote. Senator Hardiman is chairman of the subcommittee, and recommended several changes to the Governor's proposed budget.

"The budget reflects a new recognition of the importance of marriage and family programs.

"Unless we start spending funds on root causes and structural issues, all future FIA budgets will only be funding the effects and not the causes of so many issues for the department's clients," said Senator Hardiman.

SB 283 contains just under \$4 billion dollars, and funds programs ranging from cash assistance to child and adult protective services, juvenile programs for troubled and delinquent youth and programs to help clients make the transition from welfare to work. The main focus of the Family Independence Agency has shifted over the past several years moving more families off of cash assistance programs/welfare to work. "My focus when balancing this budget is how to provide families with more programs designed to make this transition possible," said Sen. Hardiman. Specific changes recommended by Senator Hardiman include restoring or increasing funding for marriage initiatives, fatherhood initiatives, the teenage parenting counseling programs, kinship care, before and after school programs, Project Zero staff workers to target specific communities for intense welfare to work programs and the clothing allowance for children of FIA clients.

While restoring funding for specific, successful innovations in these programs, SB 283 also funds the expansion of these innovations to additional counties across the state.

Additionally, the subcommittee funded programs which allow for the investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect and also for strong partnerships with public and private providers of these services.

"I am confident that the subcommittee report on SB 283 balances the needs for public accountability of funds with responsible programs to help meet the present needs and make critical new investments in addressing root causes of social and community concerns. I believe strong families build strong communities, and the FIA budget approved today furthers that goal," said Senator Hardiman.

SB 283 (S-1) is scheduled to appear before the full Senate Appropriations Committee on April 30, 2003. The other members of the committee are Senator Tom George (R-Kalamazoo) and Senator Martha Scott (D-Highland).

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